



Winter Sky

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In a bombed-out Polish village during World War II a young resistance fighter finds that he is suddenly alone and trapped between two opposing armies. He is one of Poland's "Devil's Rebels" fighting desperately to save his homeland, but an injury has erased his memory and his only possession is a torn photograph of a couple he assumes are his parents. The woman appears to be holding the hand of a young child whose image has been ripped off. Could the child be him?

Caught in the crosshairs of the retreating German army and the advancing Russian forces, the village holds nothing but destruction and despair until a mysterious young woman offers a small glimmer of hope that may represent his last chance - news of a refuge train departing from a nearby town headed for American installations at the border. But complications arise when the resistance fighter is betrayed by his own countryman and hunted by German SS Officers who are determined to kill him before they retreat. Desperately searching for a home and family he can't remember he is persuaded to rescue two children who are doomed to die without his help.

As time runs out the former rebel is faced with an impossible choice. Standing at the crossroads of saving himself or risking his life for strangers, what would motivate a young man at the brink of salvation to make one more sacrifice?

Winter Sky Details

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Author : Chris Stewart

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From Reader Review Winter Sky for online ebook

Lisa (Bookworm Lisa) says

When I was asked if I would like to read this book, I jumped at the opportunity. Chris Stewart is the author of one of my all-time favorite books, *Prologue: The Brothers*. I love the series, but *The Brothers* is my favorite.

Winter Sky takes me to a time and place that I am not as familiar with. When I think of WWII, I think of the allies vs. Germany, concentrations camps, Pearl Harbor, etc. It is easier for me to focus on the grand scale of the war and not on the people or places caught in the middle.

This book takes place in Poland. The Polish were hated by the Germans and the Russians. (A fact that I rarely remember.) The focus of the book is on Lucas, a rebel soldier who has lost his memory in a battle that nearly took his life. He is now fighting, not with a regiment, but behind the scenes and he struggles to regain his memories and deal with the pain of those memories.

He has two children who are orphaned who join him in this journey. It is heartbreaking to think of the children left alone after parents were killed senselessly. This book brings to mind the sacrifices that were made by those who fought for their country and sought to fight against oppression.

This is an excellent book. It takes place around Christmas time. Some of the images of Christ's hand in the middle of horror are inspiring. This book reminds me of all that I have to be thankful for. I also remember those who fought for their home and country. I am grateful to them and their sacrifices.

Aimee (Getting Your Read On) says

I have been reading a lot of Christmas books lately but none like this one. This book is not fluffy or even sweet. It was actually really hard for me to read and I'll tell you why. War is ugly and awful. The devastation and loss pulls at my heart and just makes me sad. This book depicts so much of the realities of war and I'll be honest in saying that I struggled reading it. But, as with most of the most awful things in the world, you find stories of men and women who display courage and kindness. They shine in the darkness that surrounds them. That is what happens in this book.

This book takes us back to WWII and the less focused on Polish people. A people caught in the cross hairs of the battle between Germany and Russia. For one young man, a rebel resistance fighter, this is his own personal nightmare. He is strong and he is brave. He is fighting to stay alive. It's an amazing tale of heroism and sacrifice.

This book is on the shorter side and didn't take me long to read. I had a hard time putting it down because the story is so compelling, but I had to because my emotions were battered. As a mother, a wife and a daughter, I cannot even begin to imagine some of the horrors described in this book. But out of this book also comes the emotion of gratitude for what I have. Much of what I have comes at a price that I didn't pay. I am a recipient of freedom and prosperity because of many others and I am indebted and grateful.

Winter Sky is not your typical Christmas story, but it will bring to a better place in the end. I'm so glad I had the chance to read it.

Content: Violence

- I received a copy of this book, free from the publisher. I was under no obligation to post a positive review. All opinions expressed are my own.

Diane S ? says

3.5 Emotionally stirring, the ending gave me goose bumps. The war is close to over, the Russians are advancing, the Germans retreating but for one Polish town, caught in the crossfire, they are barely existing. Burned and bombed out houses, starvation ever present, most of the young men gone, leaving women, children and the elderly simply trying to exist. Into their midst a young man is dropped from a train, his memory gone, his only item of value a torn picture of a man, a woman and a young child, who he assumes to be himself and his parents. A young unknown woman, a two young children will be his salvation.

As in many towns caught in the crossfire of a war, they have suffered mightily, seen much horror and devastation. As in life there are those who betray and act in their own self interest, whatever the cost and then there are those in the same circumstance that will offer aid and help. There is a German officer who instead of leading his command away from the encroaching Russians as he has been ordered, will follow his own personal vendetta and refuse to retreat. The reason for this will become apparent as the novel progresses.

Despite the war, this is a novel of hope, hope that they will live to see another day, that things can get better. The children are amazing characters, Cela, a young eight looking after her younger brother after both parents are gone. She has had to grow up way too fast as many did during this time. Yet, she will be instrumental in this story. There is also the unexplainable, things that happened that can't be accounted for rationally but nicely adds to this story.

A shorter novel but within is a small, personal glimpse of a horrible time. A time when few choices were afforded, but in some hope remained.

ARC from publisher.

Susan says

I am not someone who is (ever) drawn to WWII literature, but currently I like to find titles that I can read as an e-book on Hoopla and then check out a hard copy at my library too. This came in both formats and sounded like a short and mysterious "amnesia" story. It was so much more than that! Reading "Winter Sky" gave me vivid detail of the suffering war creates, the inner strength and lengths we go to too survive, and the hope and humanity that continues to shine through in the darkness. Lucas, Melina, Cela, Aron (and Colonel Muller) will stay with me for a long while. Thank you for this story Mr. Stewart. :)

Scott Hitchcock says

3.5*'s. This was an ARC copy.

The plot unfolds in the evaporating Eastern Front of WWII. The book offers poignant view of being stuck between two no win situations, the Russian or the Germans. At the same time it offers the choices to the characters of doing what is right when no one is looking. How far will you go to protect your children? What will you do for revenge? Who will you hurt in the process? The ending offers a sense of spirituality and the bonds beyond this world.

Michelle says

Update: A few days later I found myself still thinking about this book, the writing style, and how much I enjoyed it. So, I changed my rating to a five star rating.

This was an excellent book. It was slow getting started, and I didn't quite follow what was happening at first. But the more book progressed, the more I enjoyed it. The descriptions of the war-torn areas were stark. The portrayal of the SS officer and his quest for revenge was real and chilling without being overly descriptive.

I really enjoyed the ending. It took me a bit by surprise, although it seemed to fit. I had to go back and re-read parts of the book. As I did, the ending made more sense and came together nicely.

This is the first book by Chris Stewart that I have read. Now I think I will read other books that he has written.

Thank you to Net Galley and Shadow Mountain for a pre-read copy of this book.

Cheri says

Now Available!!

3.5 Stars

Lucas, a Polish resistance soldier, can't remember who he is, his only link is a torn photograph of a woman holding the hand of a child, but the child is not in the photo. He can't really focus much on who he is right now; he needs to avoid being killed. That has to be his top priority.

He boards a train, knowing only the name of the town where he is headed, Gorndask.

In Gorndask, another resistance fighter recognizes wandering around the town. He's worried for the safety of the townspeople and cautions him about being seen in town, telling him that his group will be leaving soon. His parting comment: "Good luck, Lucas." And so the first link leading Lucas back to him self has been given.

WWII is nearing its end, but in Poland, the Russians are advancing, and the Germans are retreating. The tension is even higher now; the pressure is on high for all. Caught in the middle of this are the people of Poland, who have already lost so much, a resistance fighter, Lucas, and two children he has been charged with taking along on his route to escape. He can't really grasp why he feels this need to care for them, to protect them, but somehow he knows he must. The woman, Melina, who charged them into his care, had told him to get them to the train departing in a nearby town on Christmas day. And so Lucas, and Cela and Aron

are on their way, with so much against them, they need to make it to this train. To safety.

“It was, perhaps, the largest army ever assembled. And the Russians were not a docile lot. “ The Russians had lost millions of their people, they had endured wanton destruction of their land, pain, hunger and deprivation. Feeling they had gained the upper hand now, they moved with rage to destroy the German army, and their path of destruction was wide.

In Poland alone, six million people had died, men, women, children, which accounted for approximately 20 percent of their population.

But this is not a story without hope. Hope is almost like a cloak wrapped around Lucas, Cela and Aron, it is so ever-present. Perhaps this is because they are all like children, Lucas is just regaining some of his memories. As he gains back more of the moments of his past, his memories, and his hope for the future, his future – all of their futures - grows.

Pub Date: 7 Sep 2016

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Shadow Mountain Publishing, NetGalley and author Chris Stewart

Heidi says

Chris Stewart has written a compelling story about a little known time and place. Many World War II stories focus on the fighting, or the different fronts of the war, Russia, France, Italy, etc. I have never read a story before that takes a look at the Polish fighters who resisted the Germans after their country had already been overrun. In a surprisingly few pages (less than 200), Stewart takes the reader into a country teetering on the edge of disaster. After so many years of war, no town is left untouched, people struggle to find enough to eat or even a place to sleep. The Germans are on the cusp of leaving, but the Russians offer no hope to the suffering people. And appearing in the midst of all this is a young resistance fighter, who finds himself in a town that is supposedly his with no memory of who he is and only a few flashbacks of where he has come from. His only clue to his identity is an old photograph he carries in his pocket. As he moves through town hoping for something to remind him of who he is, he finds himself in an old church where he meets a beautiful young lady named Melina, who gives him something to fight for. But Colonel Muller, the local German commander hates the rebels with a passion and refuses to leave until this young man has been captured and killed, no matter how dangerously close it puts him and his men to the Russians. With only one hope left, the young man sets off with two young children to find a refugee train heading towards the American lines. But with the difficult winter conditions and a freezing river ahead, and the Germans behind, their chances of survival aren't good at all. I was amazed at how much of story the Stewart manages to create in this relatively short book. In addition to the young man, we meet Zarek, a man whose willing to betray his own people, so his family can survive; we meet Antoni, a young former rebel, whose missing a leg, whose willing to sacrifice himself to save a town, and we meet Melina, a young woman who is not exactly what she seems. This is a book that tugs at the heartstrings. It wasn't easy reading about all the suffering that war brings, often to the innocent. Yet it's also a story of finding hope and courage, and a reason to keep fighting even where there appears to be none. I can highly recommend this book for those who enjoy those kinds of stories that stay with one long after you put it down.

Lori says

This is the first Chris Stewart book I've read and I think this "novel" should have been a short story. It is very short for a novel and the price paid for it. I liked the story and it was a great premise, but lacking in the depth and detail I've come to love and expect in WWII historical fiction. I'm also upset at the price of this book for what it is. That's Shadow Mountain/Deseret Book for you though, everything they publish and sell is overpriced.

Angela M says

I read a lot of WWII novels and with each one I wonder how will this compare to what has been done already and will I be moved once more? With this one the answer is a resounding yes . I was taken and touched by this story of a young rebel soldier of the Polish resistance . As the war is coming to an end, the Nazis are still not quite giving up in spite of the Russians moving in and continue with ravaging the Polish people who as the author points out in the introduction had suffered so much : "Six million men, women, and children had been lost in the war, almost 20 percent of the country's entire population." A snapshot of this horrendous suffering at the hands of the Nazis is depicted with the story of this resistance fighter who when we first meet him has no memory of where he is from, of his family or who he is . He doesn't even know his name until another injured rebel calls his name - Lucas .

There are vivid descriptions, gruesome at times, of the ravages of war - starving men, women and children who have lost everything and it is a testament to the human spirit that in spite of the deep and heartbreaking losses, some of them have still not lost hope. The children, two of them in particular in this story, Cela and Aron represent that strand of hope that changes Lucas' life. It's one of those stories that changed me too because it's one that I won't soon forget. Highly recommended.

I received this ARC from Shadow Mountain through Netgalley.

Anna says

Lucas is part of the Polish resistance in WWII. Poland is being attacked by the Nazis and the Russians. Injured in an attack, Lucas is left shell shocked and has amnesia. He is left in a bombed out village with only a photo as a clue to his past. Slowly his memories begin resurfacing and his instinct to survive remains strong. Betrayed by a villager, Lucas is being hunted by a Nazi officer determined to find and kill all resistance fighters. Despite being the Christmas season, times are dismal and grim, but glimmers of hope still exist.

The book is fast paced with enough tension and action that kept me turning the pages, but the character and plot development were lacking.

3.5 stars.,

Becca says

World War II books are hard for me to read. I cannot stomach the thought of the level of hatred during that time in history. I don't understand hate just for the reason to hate. It makes no sense. Plus they usually make me cry like a little girl.

This one didn't have as much fighting as most World War II books so it was much easier to read. Plus, it was really good. It's a short, intense, and sweet all at the same time. :)

Lucas is a rebel soldier, now. He was forced to fight for the Germans, and then forced to fight for the Russians. He finally was able to join a band of rebels that fought against the Russians and the Germans. They caused havoc on them for years. Unfortunately, the rebels don't have many men left and know that the war might be coming to an end. They are disbanding and trying to return to their homes.

Lucas had been injured saving a fellow rebel, and on their way home they drop their fellow rebel off in a little town in Poland. Lucas finds himself at a train station without any memory of how he got there or who he is.

Slowly the memories come back, and he starts to search for his family. During this time a German general was gunning for this particular rebel. He had a spy in the Polish town Lucas was in and reports to his Commander where he is.

Lucas finds a church to hide in and regain some strength. He meets a young lady there and she finds out that he is searching for his family. When Lucas decides to move on Malina decides to make him take two little kids with him when he goes. Lucas is very against it but ends up taking the children any way know it is their only hope at living.

What comes next is unexpected! It's scary, sad, and wonderful all at the same time. For such a short book it packs a punch at the heart strings.

If you like World War II books, pick this one up. It doesn't end horrible with every one dead! It wraps up in a nice bow, that is beautiful.

Source: I was given this book as part of a blog tour. I was not compensated in any way for my review. These are my own PERSONAL thoughts on the book.

Content: Clean and Wonderful!

Teresa says

It was an interesting and sad story. I liked the characters, but wish I knew a little more about them. I liked the twists in the plot line.

Jen says

Just like it's name, this is a read that will leave you shivering and wishing for a warm cloak. It is the end of

WWII. The Russians are coming for the Nazis and both sides are killing civilians and soldiers alike. For Luke, a soldier who fought as a rebel, he is just trying to survive and get back home. Searching for the past in the present, he is given a final and impossible task: One that will clearly define who he is and who he has become.

Descriptively dark and lonely, redemptive and gripping- this was one impactful story. 4.5*

Jennie says

One of those books to remember and think about for a long time.
